United Nations

Daily Highlights

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WEDNESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Full investigation into deaths of two United Nations members, NGO nurse and freelance journalist in southern Sudan last week, ordered by Secretary-General; high-level mission to go to Nairobi this weekend to review circumstances leading to incident.

+ Concerned at reports that one of parties to Angolan Peace Agreements is contesting validity of recent election, Security Council decides to send an Ad Hoc Commission to that country to support Agreements' implementation.

+ General Assembly calls for United Nations assistance to flood victims in Pakistan.

+ Continued functioning of United Nations Iraq-Kuwait Observation Mission indispensable for maintaining demilitarized zone and reducing tension, according to report by Secretary-General to Security Council; recommends extension of mandate of UNIKOM for further six-month period, until 31 March, 1993.

+ Debate in General Assembly continues with statements by Foreign Ministers of Uganda, Malawi, Belize, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Micronesia; by Chairmen of Delegations of Bhutan, Bulgaria.

+ Second Committee hears call for United Nations to launch concerted campaign to eradicate poverty; creation of 400 million jobs especially in poverty-stricken areas urged by ILO Deputy Director-General.

+ Lifting of United States travel restrictions for some nationals announced in Committee on Host Country Relations.

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A full investigation into the deaths of two United Nations staff members, an NGO nurse and a freelance journalist in southern Sudan last week has been ordered by Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, according to a statement today.

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For information media—not an official record

A high-level mission, headed by Assistant Secretary-General Abdou Ciss, would leave for Nairobi this weekend to review circumstances leading to those deaths. Since the victims were killed while on mission in connection with Operation Lifeline Sudan, the investigation mission would also include senior representatives from the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the statement said.

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Concerned at reports that one of the parties to the Angolan Peace Agreements is contesting the validity of the recent election, the Security Council last night decided to send an Ad Hoc Commission to Angola to support the implementation of the Agreements. The Commission will be composed of members of the Council and will work in close cooperation with the Secretary-General's Special Representative in Angola, Margaret Anstee.

The action came in the form of a statement read out on behalf of the Council by its President, Jean-Bernard Merimée of France, in which the Council called upon all the parties to respect the final election result.

The first-ever free multi-party elections in Angola were held on 29 and 30 September.

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The continued functioning of United Nations Iraq-Kuwait Observation Mission (UNIKOM) was an indispensable factor in maintaining the demilitarized zone and reducing tension, the Secretary-General has said. He has therefore recommended to the Security Council that it extend the mandate of UNIKOM for a further six-month period, until 31 March, 1993.

In a report to the Security Council, dated 2 October, Mr. Boutros-Ghali stated that the situation in the demilitarized zone along the Iraq-Kuwait border had been marked by a gradual heightening of tension in some areas. He warned that although the trend had not so far become a cause for concern, it needed to be carefully monitored.

The main source of tension, the Secretary-General wrote, was the issue of status of property rights of Iraqi farmers who would be affected by the demarcation of the boundary between Iraq and Kuwait. He urged both sides to exercise restraint after a number of incidents, in one of which a UNIKOM military observer was injured, and said most minor incidents could be avoided if the parties maintained a reasonable distance from the boundary line established on UNIKOM's map.
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The Permanent Representative of Bhutan to the United Nations, Ugyen Tshering, opening the continuing debate in the General Assembly this morning, said the long established target of 0.7% of GNP for official development

assistance had not been reached by most donor countries and was not likely to happen during this century because of increasing modalities and conditionalities.

The need for debt relief and the requirement of additional credit, he went on, were still awaiting comprehensive solution. Trade was one of the few avenues available to developing countries for progress and must not be restricted. It was also necessary that access to knowledge and technology be made easier.

Turning to internal issues, Mr. Tshering recalled that even though development activities in Bhutan started only in the 1960's, major changes had already taken place: an effective financial management system, a basic network of social services, a growing export sector composed of energy, minerals and agricultural products had been established since then. Despite this progress, Bhutan's economic infrastructure remained inadequate and, in addition to the problems all Least Developed Countries faced, Bhutan, he said, was further handicapped by being landlocked.

The Permanent Representative to the United Nations of Bulgaria, Slavi Pashovski, said this morning that the Yugoslav crisis had to be contained and that an additional effective means might be the deployment of international observers. Bulgaria was willing to accept such mission on its territory.

The sanctions imposed by the Security Council, he went on, also affected countries which applied them, and Bulgaria's economy had suffered considerable losses. Compensation programmes and a "Marshall plan for the recovery of the Balkans" should be set up to avoid punishing innocent countries, he said.

Bulgaria was in the process of establishing friendly relations and signing peace agreements with neighbouring States, including Serbia and Montenegro. However, he stated, the deaths, refugee problems and the barbaric practice of "ethnic cleansing" eloquently demonstrated the need to create an international criminal court to judge individuals.

Uganda was committed to the liberalization of its economy and had enacted an attractive foreign investment code, Paul Kawanga Ssemogerere, Second Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Uganda, said this morning. These reforms could be meaningful only if the external economic environment was supportive and responded positively through increased investment and trade.

Turning to regional issues, the Foreign Minister deplored the conflict in Southern Sudan, whose solution lay, he said, in dialogue and reconciliation among all parties. He expressed the hope that both the Government of Sudan and the SPLA would facilitate the international humanitarian relief effort which, at the moment, he regretted, was suspended with only little help reaching the affected population.

The Foreign Minister welcomed the "fruitful" regional and international initiatives for the resolution of the social and armed conflict in Rwanda. His country, he said, supported the on-going dialogue, under Tanzanian mediation,

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between the Rwanda authorities and the Rwandese Patriotic Front, and appreciated the constructive and helpful role played by the international observers in those negotiations, he said.

The Deputy Minister of External Affairs of Malawi, Lovemore .G. Munlo, renewed this afternoon his appeal for urgent assistance to avert a further worsening of conditions in his country as a result of the severe drought in Southern Africa. The drought had had a "major debilitating effect" on the socio-economic development of his country, he said, adding that the situation had remained critical, despite the assistance of the international community. Malawi, which was normally self-sufficient in food, had been adversely affected and was now facing serious food shortfalls. Fifty per cent of its food aid needs had not yet been met, the Minister said.

Malawi's human rights record had led to reduced support for the country's development programmes, the Minister said, announcing that his Government had embarked on a "vigorous programme aimed at transparent demonstration of its continued respect for human rights" at a policy level and in practice. Its action had included the release of political detainees as well as inviting the International Committee of the Red Cross to visit prisons and places of detention in his country, he said.

He also welcomed the Peace Accord signed on 4 October between the President of Mozambique and the leader of RENAMO. The end of the 16 years of civil war in Mozambique also meant that the Nacala and Beira corridors, Malawi's most cost-effective routes to the sea, would begin to function at full capacity, he said.

He also told the Assembly that Malawi had been host over the years to over 1 million refugees from Mozambique, and expressed hope that they could now return to their homes. The role of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was extremely important, he said, not only in facilitating the return and resettlement of the refugees, but also internally displaced people.

Said Musa, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Economic Development and Education of Belize, told the Assembly this afternoon that the external debt of Latin America and the Caribbean had not been reduced but had escalated alarmingly in the past ten years, from $285 billion in 1981 to $500 billion today. At the same time, he said, the application of structural adjustment policies had enormously increased the social debt in many countries of the region since the burden of payment had fallen disproportionately on the poor.

Cancellation or reduction of the debt of underdeveloped countries would be an act of justice, he said, a first step in the process of constructing a new world order that will enable sustainable development.

Speaking of the situation in Haiti, the Foreign Minister said that his country, as part of the Caribbean region, could not remain silent by the exile

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of the first freely elected President of Haiti. Neither could Belize condone the systematic strangulation of another Caribbean nation in violation of all norms of international law.

The Caribbean region, and especially the countries of the Windward Islands, of which St. Vincent and the Grenadines is a part, had firmly committes themselves to structural adjustment and other economic reforms designed to increase their export earnings and competitiveness in the global economy, Herbert George Young, Foreign Minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, told the Assembly. In the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States, free trade was established in 1988, and in the wider CARICOM grouping the 1984 Nassua Agreement on Structural Adjustment, and the 1989 Grand Anse Declaration, was expressed the urgency that the regional leadership attached to the transformation process.

Mr. Musa also urged the early ratification of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and the Convention on Biological Diversity, which, he said, could mitigate some of the hazards which small Caribbean Islands, like his country, and other low-lying coastal developing States faced.

The Secretary for External Affairs of Micronesia, Resio S. Moses, in his statement this afternoon said that, to the modest extend that the Federated States of Micronesia had made its presence known within the past year, it had been mostly in the context of the environment, and particularly in the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for a Framework Convention on Climate Change. Micronesia were comprised of low-lying, small islands, which was why the entire nation found itself on the frontline along with others similarly situated who would suffer devastating consequences of unchecked global warming.

Rising sea levels would ultimately cover the islands, but long before that the protective coral reefs would bleach and fall victim to increased storm surges, which would ruin crops and render unfit frechwater resources. "We are facing nothing less than the end of island civilizations that have endured for thousands of years", Mr. Moses said. Micronesia was therefore looking anxiously toward the prompt implementation of the Framework Convention on Climate Change. The objective was to stabilize greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at levels which did not adversely affect the climate, he said.

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A call for the United Nations to launch a concerted campaign to eradicate poverty was made this morning by the Representative of Mexico, Jorge Montaño, as he addressed the General Assembly's Second Committee (Economic and Financial) in its continuing debate on the world economic situation.

"Eliminating poverty means not only assisting the most vulnerable population groups but, basically, laying the foundations for integrating them into production processes and enabling them to share the benefits of development", Mr. Montaño said. Noting today's signing of the North American

Free Trade Agreement, he added that it "aimed not at the formation of closed blocs, but at free trade which will benefit from comparative advantages and make gainful use of the geographical situation".

Yesterday, Heribert Maier, Deputy Director-General of the International Labour Organization (ILO) told the Committee that some 400 million jobs must be created in the coming years, including 10 million just to maintain current employment levels in Africa alone. The prospects for creating jobs were not bright, he said, and workers in developing countries would be left with the choice between seeking jobs in the informal sector or migrating to other lands in order to survive. Every effort must be made to generate employment opportunities in poverty-stricken countries and areas, Mr. Maier said.

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Travel restrictions on senior diplomatic personnel of the Russian Federation Mission to the United Nations and on Russian nationals working with the United Nations Secretariat are to be removed, according to an announcement yesterday by the Chairman of the Committee on Relations with the Host Country, Constantine Moushoutas of Cyprus. He said the host country -- the United States -- had also removed restrictions on travel of Georgian Mission staff and Georgians working with the Secretariat.

During yesterday's session, the issue of indebtedness was also brought up before the Committee. The observer for Switzerland, Paul R. Seger, told the Committee that the United Nations should take effective punitive action against Member States that accrued large local debts and did not pay. The Organization had the authority since the missions were accredited to the United Nations, not to the host country.

Safa Ahmed, the representative of Iraq, called for an unfreezing of his country's liquid assets in the United States which had been frozen by the Government of the host country, saying those assets included money used for running the Iraqi Mission to the United Nations. The assets should be released so that the Mission could pay its staff and for its housing, he said. He also called for the lifting of travel restrictions on all diplomatic mission personnel.

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Violations of the immunities of diplomatic and consular representatives and violent attacks against their missions were condemned this morning, as the General Assembly's Sixth Committee (Legal) began consideration of effective measures to enhance the protection, security and safety of diplomatic and consular missions and representatives.

Speaking on behalf of the European Community and its member States, the representative of the United Kingdom said that many of the incidents described in a report of the Secretary-General on the topic had involved missions or

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representatives of the same States. Whatever the policies of those States, he said, there could be no justification for criminal attacks against their missions.

The representative of Venezuela drew the Committee's attention to the Security Council statement of 2 April, which had strongly condemned an attack on the Venezuelan Embassy in Tripoli and had demanded that the Government of Libya provide compensation. The representative of Libya informed the Committee that Libyan security forces had responded appropriately to the incident and that the Government had provided compensation for damages to the Embassy.

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